IN THE COURT OF CHANCERY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE

FLI DEEP MARINE LLC, BRESSNER : PARTNERS LTD., LOGAN LANGBERG AND HARLEY LANGBERG :

Plaintiffs,

:

vs. : Civil Action : No. 5020-VCS

PAUL McKIM, B.J. THOMAS,
DANIEL ERIKSON, FRANCIS WADE
ABADIE, OTTO CANDIES, JR.,
OTTO CANDIES, III, EUGENE
DePALMA, LARRY LENIG, JOHN
ELLINGBOE, BRUCE GILMAN, JOHN
HUDGENS, NASSER KAZEMINY, DCC
VENTURES, LLC, NJK HOLDINGS
CORPORATION, NKOC, INC., OTTO
CANDIES, LLC, DEEP MARINE
HOLDINGS, INC., AND DEEP
MARINE TECHNOLOGY, INC.,

Defendants.

Chancery Court Chambers
New Castle County Courthouse
Wilmington, Delaware
Monday, November 2, 2009
10:00 a.m.

BEFORE: HON. LEO E. STRINE, JR., Vice Chancellor.

OFFICE CONFERENCE

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CHANCERY COURT REPORTERS
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1	APPEARANCES: (Cont'd)
2	TODD C. SCHILTZ, ESQ.
3	Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP For Defendants Bruce Gilman, Larry Lenig and Francis Wade Abadie
4	
5	DAVID S. EAGLE, ESQ. Klehr, Harrison, Harvey, Branzburg & Ellers LLP
6	For Defendants Daniel Erikson, Eugene DePalma, John Hudgens,
7	Nasser Kazeminy, DCC Ventures, LlC and NJK Holdings Corporation
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- 1 THE COURT: Good morning, everyone. 2 You may proceed. 3 MS. HARRISON: Good morning, Your Kate Harrison from Paduano & Weintraub, 4 5 counsel to FLI Deep Marine LLC, Bressner Partners, 6 Ltd., and the Langbergs, former minority shareholders 7 of approximately 5 percent of Deep Marine Holdings, Inc., and its wholly owned subsidiaries Deep Marine 8 9 Technology, which we call together DMT. 10 Plaintiffs were most recently squeezed 11 out of DMT in a Delaware short-form merger. 12 defendants are DMT, the controlling shareholders and their entities, the current and former officers and 13 14 directors who have systematically stripped plaintiff 15 of their entire \$1.75 million investment and their 16 legal rights to complain or even inquire about what 17 happened to the company they invested in. 18 Plaintiff invested approximately 19
  - Plaintiff invested approximately \$1.75 million in 2002 in a startup company to provide subsea services in the oil and gas industry -- offshore, mainly, Gulf of Mexico.
- THE COURT: I've read everything.
- 23 We're at a scheduling conference.

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What is it you're seeking to enjoin?

MS. HARRISON: We want to make sure that what remains of the assets of DMT are not taken out of the jurisdiction so that we are left with absolutely no remedy.

We fear that DMT and these defendants are right now in the middle of selling the last few valuable assets -- the vessels -- and that they may be selling them under market value and that the proceeds will disappear. So we seek to -- we seek to enjoin only sales out of the ordinary course, and we just ask that the proceeds be held in escrow and we seek expedited discovery.

THE COURT: Okay.

MR. MAIMONE: Your Honor, Mike Maimone for Deep Marine Holdings and Deep Marine Technology.

What plaintiffs are seeking here is, in my view, unusual. I don't -- we view this as a statutory appraisal action. We think all the issues that are set forth in the complaint should be dealt with in the appraisal action. I think the Glassman decision in the Supreme Court holds that.

Actually, the fiduciary duty claims are probably subject to a motion to dismiss by my friends on the defendants' side, since I represent the

company, the company has no fiduciary duty. But in connection with the current application, plaintiffs base their application on pure speculation. Deep Marine is an operating company. I was told by Deep Marine that there's no plans to liquidate. There's no plans to dissolve. They're merely trying to raise cash to keep the operations going.

The plaintiffs, as a form of stockholders, have taken the status as creditors. In the Alabama By-Products decision, the Supreme Court held that if you perfect your appraisal rights -- we're not conceding that everyone perfected their appraisal rights -- but to the extent that any of the plaintiffs perfected their appraisal rights, they're creditors of the company and we believe they have full rights of creditors. They have the fraudulent conveyance laws to protect them -- 174 to protect them. They have all the relief that the Court of Chancery recognized in North American Catholic to protect them.

So we don't really see the reason to enter a TRO because Deep -- there's no -- based in the complaint or any of the papers tendered, a TRO -- Deep Marine is an operating company. It's going forward.

If that changes, then plaintiffs can enforce their 1 2 rights at that time. Right now, plaintiffs haven't a 3 ripeness argument because nothing is happening. 4 Plaintiffs are dealing with speculation because they 5 don't know anything and there's nothing really to 6 This is a damages action, where we can just 7 move forward in the ordinary course. My friends on 8 the defendants' side could file whatever motions they 9 deem appropriate in connection with a motion to 10 The company will deal with the appraisal dismiss. 11 action appropriately, and we can just move forward 12 with the appraisal action and whatever motion practice 13 my friends feel --14 THE COURT: When the appraisal notice was given, was the special committee report disclosed? 15 16 MR. MAIMONE: My understanding is it 17 was not. 18 MS. HARRISON: As you can tell from the chronology of the case, the company announced that 19 20 the committee had reached its conclusion. It did not 21 give anybody the report, and the very next day it 22 announced the short-form merger. So it thereby ruined our standing to continue the derivative action the 23 24 very next day. So we find the timing of that highly

- 8 suspicious. I think, when Vice Chancellor Noble 1 dismissed our derivative action without prejudice, he 2 assumed that we would be back. 3 THE COURT: Did no one get Mr. Miller 4 5 on the phone? 6 He is on the line. 7 Okay. Here's what we're going to do, 8 I'm not setting up any kind of injunction 9 schedule. I don't know what we would enjoin. On the 10 other hand, I am granting expedited discovery.
- 12 (Discussion off the record.)

not exactly clear -- off the record.

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THE COURT: Back on the record. This is a little wacky situation. I don't want -- I will tell the defendants -- individual defendants -- don't be looking for me to be sympathetic to motions to stay discovery. Discovery is not going to be stayed. I'm allowing expedited discovery because, frankly, this is a record that creates a situation that -- at least a colorable perception that people are horsing around. I mean, the moving papers, with all fairness to the defendants, telling me that they somehow got vindicated in the derivative action, that's not what happened at all. That is not what Vice Chancellor

Noble's decision says. What it says is people goofed 1 It's not the first time I've seen people goof up 2 like this. Folks who don't consult with Delaware 3 4 lawyers early on in a process sometimes, when they 5 make a demand, they go, "Oops." But the point is, 6 there's basis under the law to challenge even a special committee's investigation. But you have to 7 8 wait until it's done. 9 As I understand what the defendants 10 did before Vice Chancellor Noble is say, "Look, the 11 law's the law." They goofed up. I believe Vice Chancellor Noble indicated some doubts about the 12 13 independence of the committee. He let the process go 14 forward. Frankly, the defendants made arguments about 15 the amount of time they needed. It's not clear to me. 16 You can all shed light on this later on whether the 17 defendants were forthcoming about when they were 18 planning the merger, whether they were at all planning 19 a merger during the pendency of the suit before 20 Vice Chancellor Noble, whether they let anyone know 21 about it. Very interesting circumstances. 22 It may well be that all of these 23 things can be litigated purely in the context of the 24 appraisal. But the reality is, that's why discovery

1 should go forward because, if the defendants' --2 individual defendants' -- argument is it all got bought into the respondent, but you have to value all 3 4 these claims in the appraisal, well, then, the 5 discovery should go forward because it's essentially a 6 merits discovery. It's going to be relevant to value. 7 I also think there is some concern 8 about the respondent and the ability of the respondent 9 to answer these claims. You know, it would be a much 10 more edifying record, if somebody wants to put out an 11 appraisal notice with the actual report, if there is 12 such a report. Who knows at this point? What there 13 was some sort of exculpatory release apparently 14 saying, you know, nothing happened that was actionable 15 and there's a short-form merger and I think people got 16 offered pennies. 17 One penny a share. MS. HARRISON: 18 THE COURT: A penny a share. 19 So, it's a rather odd circumstance. 20 have read Glassman. I'm very familiar with the 253 21 jurisprudence. I don't know what the exception is for 22 fraud, other sorts of things. But I won't rule out at 23 this stage the following possibility. There's a 24 derivative action pending. Folks made a procedural

goof-up by making a demand. A special committee is 1 formed in order to delay, doesn't really do a 2 3 professional job or an independent job, issues a 4 report which -- to somebody, but not to any of the 5 people who brought the derivative claims. And while it gets the case dismissed on the grounds of delay, 6 7 that we need to investigate this and, immediately upon 8 concluding this thing, a short-form merger is done to 9 excuse -- to essentially wipe out the claim. 10 know that there is jurisprudence that says, when a 11 merger is done specifically for the purpose of getting 12 rid of claims, that that doesn't really get rid of the 13 If there's ever a circumstance again where 14 people have played themselves into a perception, I 15 could not on a motion to dismiss rule out the 16 inference that these folks wanted to get rid of these 17 claims and did a short-form merger. You know, mergers 18 are powerful things. They're not just thought of 19 instantaneously. This one was done fairly shortly after Vice Chancellor Noble considered a motion to 20 21 dismiss and granted it. 22 So what I would also urge on the 23 plaintiffs' side -- and I think I get into the 24 There's really no need. We're seeing Delaware law.

1 this more and more in the Court. 7 million counts. mean, I'm not saying -- you know, aiding and abetting 2 against the officer and director defendants. 3 4 you're an officer and director, there's a term for 5 when you aid and abet a breach of fiduciary duty. 6 It's called a breach of fiduciary duty. 7 not -- we don't have like everybody is quilty of a 8 breach of fiduciary duty, plus because they did it in 9 concert with their fellows in aiding and abetting 10 claim. 11 I don't know what this fraud through 12 concealment is. How is that different from breach of 13 fiduciary duty? Fraud through silence in the face of 14 disclosure. A claim against controlling shareholders for wrongful equity dilution. Claim against 15 16 controlling shareholder defendants for unjust enrichment. I don't know how that's different from 17 the third cause of action, which is claims against the 18 19 controlling shareholder for breaches of their 20 fiduciary duties. It strikes me that, if they didn't 21 breach their fiduciary duties, there was no unjust 22 enrichment that, with respect to wrongful equity dilution, what you're arguing is, there is a breach of 23

fiduciary duty and therefore these were self-dealing

1 transactions that wrongfully diluted folks because the 2 transactions were improperly priced or motivated. 3 These are not really separate causes of action. 4 Accounting. Accounting is a remedy. 5 You can put that in the wherefore clause, I believe. 6 You can say, wherefore because there have been breaches of fiduciary duty, we need to get to the 7 8 bottom of this. There ought to be an accounting. All 9 I'm saying is, you're going to get expedited 10 discovery. I would urge on the cost sides of this --11 I don't know how big this company is or what it is. 12 All I do know is two, four, six, eight, ten, 12, 13, plus Mr. Miller on the phone, 14 lawyers, let the 13 14 record reflect. And I may have miscounted. I'm not 15 that great at math. Fourteen lawyers already. 16 is an expensive morning; right? For the cost of this 17 morning, you could have doubled the consideration 18 given in the merger to the plaintiff. Right? 19 You know, only clients know what 20 really happened. Obviously there are professors of 21 philosophy who would say even they don't actually know 22 what happens. They have a perception of what But my point is that, you know, one of the

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things that our profession really has to do is, you

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1 always have to take -- you want to be vigilant in 2 representing your clients, but you actually need to challenge them and talk to them. 3 I don't know how 4 really valuable this is from the plaintiffs' side. Ι don't know if this was a business going down the 5 6 There's obviously the possibility, for 7 example, that these people did trivial -- even if you 8 accept the complaint as true -- did trivial 9 self-dealing transactions around the margins because 10 there was a political buddy. But that, in the scheme 11 of the world, they don't add up to a lot of economic 12 value. 13 I mean, you know, is this case really 14 about Mr. -- former Senator and Mrs. Coleman? If it's 15 a matter of that and some sort of principle, the case 16 might be settleable on that basis. Give to the people 17 who were cashed out the maximum amounts allegedly 18 overpaid to Senator Coleman and Mrs. Coleman. 19 get it -- I might be wrong -- but it wouldn't be 20 gazillions of dollars. It might be nice for people 21 like around here who work for the state and yearly pay

But my point is that out of that does

or whatever it was a month, or \$75,000.

cuts, we would like to have some supplement of 25,000,

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- 1 not an appraisal case make. These obviously -- these 2 things with boats, though, and other things, at first I couldn't -- Mr. Candies' name got me distracted 3 4 because I was trying to figure out the synergies 5 between a maritime company and some sort of candy 6 company, until I realized this was just a person's 7 It's like oh, there's Candies. A venerable 8 chocolatier in Minneapolis. Everybody at 9 Christmastime gives a box of Otto Candies to their 10 kids. 11 But what I'm saying, you have to size 12 up what you get out of this rather than you're just 13 angry. I'm not saying that's what's motivating it. 14 You have to figure that out. 15 On the defendants' side, again, you
  - On the defendants' side, again, you know, you can't represent your clients without doing a reality check on what went on. And sometimes things that -- you know, sometimes things that look slick are perfectly fine. And when it's all said and done, it all looks above board. Obviously, when things that are done are slick, they look slick. The genuinely slick don't look slick because they figure out ways for it not to look, you know, so immediately suspicious. This is a situation where people managed.

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- 1 | Might have been the best thing in the end. I don't
- 2 know. But obviously was a course of events that
- 3 didn't look exactly edifying, particularly a
- 4 | short-form merger like this where the economic
- 5 consideration given to the people being cashed out was
- 6 basically bupkis.
- 7 So, before you get into discovery, you
- 8 | may want to figure out where your respective positions
- 9 are. What are the plaintiffs seeking out of this? I
- 10 | don't know how many stockholders there were in
- 11 | general. Obviously the investment -- is the
- 12 | investment of all the cashed out people 1.7 million?
- MS. HARRISON: No. That's just our
- 14 | clients. There are a couple of other -- not very many
- 15 | minority shareholders. There are a couple of other
- 16 groups.
- 17 THE COURT: You don't know what their
- 18 | percentage holdings were in comparison to your
- 19 clients?
- MS. HARRISON: Well, at the end of it,
- 21 | because of the short-form merger, they held
- 22 | 90 percent, we held 5 percent.
- 23 THE COURT: I'm just talking about
- 24 like in terms of cash in. You're saying your clients

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1 | put in 1.7 million to get in?
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- MS. HARRISON: I don't know that. But
- 3 | I know there is a group -- there is another group of
- 4 | minority shareholders --
- 5 THE COURT: Did they perfect appraisal
- 6 rates?
- 7 MS. KRAFT: DeepWork is here, Your
- 8 Honor, we filed a tag-along action and we did perfect
- 9 our rights, is our contention, and that was somewhere
- 10 | in the vicinity of \$800,000. A little bit over a
- 11 | million. I'm still trying to figure that out.
- 12 THE COURT: So there's another action.
- 13 Have I gotten papers in chambers about that?
- 14 MS. KRAFT: They were sent over on
- 15 | Friday. My understanding -- and I spoke with counsel
- 16 | for the FLI plaintiff earlier -- is that there are a
- 17 | couple other minority shareholders. This was not
- 18 | filed as a class action. That's another consideration
- 19 for amendment. We haven't really spoken about that.
- THE COURT: Well, I think one of the
- 21 | things you ought to be talking about is coordinating
- 22 | whether it's a class action or not. Obviously it
- 23 | would be better to have one complaint. But between
- 24 your two groups, do we essentially have all the other

MS. HARRISON: Well, because we believe he was a whistleblower, in a sense.

THE COURT: Right.

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What I'm trying to talk about here is -- in a room where we got -- what did we say? --we counted up with Mr. Miller, 15 or 14 lawyers -- is, as we go forward, there will be material amounts of money spent.

MS. HARRISON: Absolutely right.

THE COURT: All I'm saying is,

sometimes what people want -- you know, they don't want to be suckers -- is sometimes, if you focus early on what's at stake, what the costs of enforcement are and all that kind of good stuff, you know, it may be like everybody gives their clients litigation budgets and all that kind of stuff. That before you go spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, as you will in discovery, no doubt, that you begin to think about, you know, what it is. Sometimes people's investments in -- "Like I at least want my money back and I think these people are jerks and I will never invest with them again. If I can at least get the skin that I put in the game back or something like it, then I'm willing to move on because I'm realistic about the You know, I don't know. world." I don't know what that would mean in terms of the defendants.

1 know any of it.

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2 I do know, as professionals, if you're representing people who are being rational, now is the 3 4 time, rather than later, to think about it. What I'm saying to the defendants is, this is not a surgical 5 6 This is not one you're going to come in and say 7 this is a really neat, tidy record. 8 Warren Buffett and Bill Gates as the special 9 committee, advised by counsel for religious elders and 10 ethics professors, and therefore, you know, you just 11 get rid of it early. It's just not going to be that 12 way. It may over time bear up. But it bears up after, you know, that wonderful thing we call 13 14 discovery. 15 And after the discovery happens, 16 people writing briefs and all that kind of stuff, 17 which, again, I don't know how people keep that in the 18 five figures. Since you all -- you are going to have 19 those costs, too. Fee shifting is not prevalent in 20 I don't know what these things are worth in the U.S. 21 the current market. So take that to heart. I don't 22 need to set a schedule at this point. You need to

What I would suggest would be

talk about getting discovery going.

- 1 | rational, if you're not going to get it settled, would
- 2 be that you focus on getting some document discovery
- 3 done first, then perhaps getting the plaintiffs to --
- 4 | the multiple plaintiffs to coordinate and file an
- 5 amended pleading that everybody takes a shot at.
- 6 MS. HARRISON: Your Honor, this is a
- 7 difficult group of lawyers. I've had already
- 8 difficult experiences with this group. If I could ask
- 9 you to set some kind of a schedule, also. We need it.
- 10 | That's one reason I'm here.
- 11 THE COURT: What I would tell to the
- 12 defendants, this is going to be sort of
- 13 | self-enforcing. You're going to have claims holding
- 14 over your head until you get the document discovery
- 15 done.
- You know, it's going to be pretty
- 17 | simple. You know, they're going to want to get rid of
- 18 | the claims. Well, you're shaking your head. I'm not
- 19 going to do this. Look, they're in court now. If
- 20 people horse around with this Court, this Court takes
- 21 | care of them. I've ordered the discovery to go
- 22 | forward and it's going to go forward. If people are
- 23 obstinate, they will -- you can file a motion.
- MS. HARRISON: Thank you.

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                    THE COURT: I think everybody
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    understands.
                    I have no idea -- you said they're
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    difficult. I don't know how difficult you've been,
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    not to say that you're not the most gracious,
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    wonderful person in the world. I'm just not there.
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    Sometimes it's been my experience that -- on more than
    one occasion -- that difficulties arise and no one is
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    exactly in the right.
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                    What I'm saying is, you haven't made
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    any kind of record of that today. You have not.
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                    MS. HARRISON: It's in my affidavit.
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                    THE COURT: What, that they didn't
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    give you documents?
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                    MS. HARRISON:
                                   It's in my affidavit
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    that my very first phone call with Nasser Kazeminy's
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    law firm is the man threatening me.
                                         It's a very
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    difficult group of lawyers. I've never experienced
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    that kind of difficulty in my life, and I've been
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    practicing for 20 years. And I practice in
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    New York City where you think they're tough. I have
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    not experienced this before. And I really believe
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    that we need --
                    THE COURT: Well, you're in Chancery
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- 1 now. I don't know who is representing -- I can't
  2 pronounce his name at this point.
- MR. EAGLE: This is David Eagle. I'm
- 4 representing Nasser Kazeminy. I never met Miss
- 5 Harrison until this morning. Never had a phone call
- 6 or e-mail. We're in Delaware. We're in Chancery
- 7 Court. Everyone is going to work cooperatively.
- 8 THE COURT: If you hear from somebody
- 9 who is not admitted pro hac about this case, then
- 10 bring it to the attention of the Court. What you did
- 11 | in -- before this case was filed -- again, I was not
- 12 | the Judge. I don't know if this was before in the
- 13 later case, or after the dismissal or whatever. But I
- 14 have found that when people have to file pro hac and
- 15 get -- you know, face the music, all -- we do have
- 16 | Delaware lawyers here and they're regularly
- 17 | accountable to the Court. And they're the ones -- the
- 18 people who are appearing here are the ones going to be
- 19 responsible for discovery.
- I also expect -- I shouldn't have to
- 21 | say this, but I've been astonished -- I expect that
- 22 | the Delaware lawyers will be meaningful in discovery
- 23 and discovery is not left to clients. People visit
- 24 offices, people find out where the documents are.

1 People don't tell clients, "Go through your hard drive 2 and find your e-mails." That is not discovery. was never appropriate discovery before e-mail. 3 certainly not now. You never told a client, "Oh, look 4 5 in your drawer. Find all the good stuff and send it 6 to me." Yeah. Right. I mean, that is not a 7 trustworthy way to do discovery. 8 I'm also assuming, if there was a 9 special committee report, that a lot of the stuff is 10 compiled. 11 MS. SCHENKER POLLECK: Your Honor, 12 could you order a stipulated order for discovery or --13 THE COURT: If you all -- the ones 14 getting close to the line now are on the plaintiffs' 15 side of the table. Okay? This is not take-out. I'm 16 not taking your take-out menu. I ordered expedited 17 discovery. The first instance you sit down, you can 18 use the room here and you can talk to your colleagues. 19 The way we're going to do this is documents first. 20 said that. I think I've been pretty clear. You get 21 the documents from all the defendants. 22 What I would then suggest is a period of time for the plaintiff to put together an amended 23

I'm not going to say whether expedited

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pleading.

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